

***Child Support Awareness Month Celebration
State Capitol, Sacramento CA
Tuesday August 12, 2003***

**Remarks by
Curtis L. Child, Director
California Department of Child Support Services**



Good Morning, everyone. Welcome to California's celebration of Child Support Awareness Month.

I'm Curtis Child, Director of the California Department of Child Support Services.

On behalf of Governor Gray Davis, Health And Human Services Secretary Grantland Johnson and the Department Of Child Support Services, I want to thank you for joining us today.

Child Support Awareness Month is observed in August of each year throughout the nation to focus public attention on the importance of parents supporting their children. Regular child support payments are critical to the well-being of millions of children across the country. In fact, this program serves more children than any other program outside of education.

Recognizing the importance of child support to children, Governor Davis has issued a proclamation declaring August as Child Support Awareness Month in California.

The Governor has a long-standing commitment to improving the lives of our children through the child support program. In his first year in office, the Governor signed landmark legislation overhauling the state's child support program and creating the state department now responsible for overseeing child support collections in California.

As a result, California's child support program has consistently improved its performance each year. In fact, California's child support program was recognized just last week as the "Most Improved Child Support Program" in the United States by the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA), a national organization representing more than 65,000 child support professionals.

This national recognition truly gives us something to celebrate during child support awareness month.

Before moving on to our other speakers let me share with you some of our specific recent successes in California.

First, the department has collected and distributed more than \$2.2 billion dollars of child support this year, a new collections record for the state. In the last five years, the amount of child support collections have more than doubled, increasing by nearly \$1 billion.

Second, we distributed last year, an average of \$2,722 for nearly 800,000 families. Child support is now becoming a reliable source of income for those families

Third, we have established 25,076 more child support orders and 53,930 more health insurance orders than the year before.

Fourth, this year we also saved California over \$100 million dollars by avoiding federal penalties and increasing federal incentives as a result of significantly improving our data reliability.

Finally, since the creation of the new department, the child support program has returned \$225 million to the state and county general funds above and beyond the costs of the program by recovering welfare costs for children who have not been supported by their parents.

Equally important, California leads the country in customer service and outreach. our recently implemented complaint resolution process has been heralded by child support advocates as a model for the nation.

We have made it clear that it is not acceptable for parents to refuse to support their children. If they do refuse, we will use all of our enforcement tools to ensure that child support payments are promptly made. but, beyond that, we have implemented programs that not only encourage parents to support their children financially but also to participate in their children's lives emotionally. child support is not only a financial transaction, it is an emotional relationship.

Child Support Awareness Month lets us highlight our year-round effort to serve California's families and children. California's child support program continues to break new ground in collections, program improvements and customer service for the families we serve. The big winners are our children.

Thank you all for coming to support our children.

Other speakers included:

Grantland Johnson, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency.

David Ingersoll, President of the California Child Support Directors Association and Director of the Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services.

Cindy Moore, member of the Board Of Directors of the California Child Support Directors Association and Director of the Sonoma County Department Of Child Support Services.

Cheryl Sprague, representative of ACES – The Association for Children for Enforcement of Support, a national child support advocacy organization.

Xavier Slaughter, from the “Fathers at Work Initiative Program” Rubicon Employment Services in Contra Costa County.